

APHCA Networking Forum



**ALABAMA PRIMARY
HEALTH CARE ASSOCIATION**

**Leading with Emotional Intelligence
to Drive Patient-Centered Care**

May 5-6, 2026

Montgomery Marriott Prattville Hotel
and Conference Center at Capitol Hill

Networking Forum: Leading with Emotional Intelligence to Drive Patient-Centered Care

Tuesday, May 5

10:00 – 11:00 AM Leadership Framing – Patient Experience as a Leadership Imperative

This session positions patient experience as a critical leadership responsibility essential to organizational success. Participants will begin with an overview of the Alabama health center landscape, using key data to ground the discussion and highlight the strategic importance of patient experience. The session will move beyond the traditional view of customer service, emphasizing patient experience as an outcome of leadership priorities, organizational alignment, and day-to-day operations. Attendees will explore the direct connection between leadership behaviors, employee engagement, and patient outcomes, gaining insight into how leadership actions shape both staff performance and patient perceptions. The session will also introduce Emotional Intelligence (EI) as a foundational leadership competency, equipping participants with the awareness and skills needed to influence team dynamics, strengthen relationships, and drive meaningful improvements in the patient experience.

11:00 – 12:00 PM Emotional Intelligence in Action

This session translates emotional intelligence into practical leadership behaviors that directly influence team performance and the patient experience. Participants will explore the role of self-awareness in strengthening leadership presence, particularly in high-pressure situations, and how recognizing one's own responses can shape interactions and decision-making. The session will also examine self-regulation as a critical skill for maintaining consistency, professionalism, and trust across teams and patient encounters. Leaders will gain insight into how their ability to manage reactions impacts staff morale, communication, and overall patient perceptions. In addition, the session will highlight empathy and relational intelligence as key drivers of trust, engagement, and meaningful connections with both employees and patients.

Participants will identify practical leadership behaviors that shape the day-to-day experience of staff and patients, and will leave with actionable strategies to lead with intention and strengthen outcomes across their organizations.

12:00 – 1:00 PM

Lunch

12:00 – 1:00 PM

HCCN Committee (*invite only*)

1:00 – 2:30 PM

Linking Workforce Engagement to Patient Experience Outcomes

This session focuses on how organizations can effectively assess and interpret the factors that shape both employee and patient experiences. Participants will be introduced to key measurement tools, including patient satisfaction surveys, operational performance metrics, and staff engagement data, to build a comprehensive understanding of current performance. The session will explore the critical connection between employee experience and patient satisfaction, highlighting how workforce engagement, morale, and support directly influence patient perceptions and outcomes. Attendees will learn how to identify the underlying emotional and operational drivers that impact performance, moving beyond surface-level data to uncover root causes.

2:30 – 3:00 PM

Break

3:00 – 4:00 PM

Applying Patient Experience in Practice

This session focuses on translating patient experience principles into consistent, day-to-day actions across the organization. Participants will explore how to embed patient-centered behaviors into daily operations, ensuring that every interaction reflects a commitment to quality, respect, and responsiveness. The session will highlight strategies to strengthen communication at all levels, enhance service recovery efforts, and reinforce accountability among staff. Leaders will gain practical approaches to addressing challenges in real time while maintaining trust and continuity in the patient experience. Additionally, participants will learn how to effectively integrate patient and staff feedback into workflows, using insights to inform decision-making and drive continuous improvement.

4:00 – 5:00 PM

Cinco De Mayo Networking Reception

Wednesday, May 6

8:00 – 9:00 AM **Breakfast**

9:00 – 10:30 AM **Strengthening Referral Pathways & Addressing Social Needs: A Case-Based Learning Session**

This interactive session uses real-world case scenarios to explore how health centers can strengthen referral pathways and more effectively address patients' social needs. Participants will examine common challenges in coordinating care beyond the clinical setting and work through practical approaches to building and sustaining partnerships with community-based organizations. Through a guided case discussion, attendees will identify strategies for creating more reliable, responsive referral networks that support patients across the continuum of care. The session will also focus on integrating non-health-related needs into care delivery, helping teams recognize and respond to factors such as housing, food access, transportation, and other barriers that impact health outcomes and the overall patient experience. Participants will leave with actionable ideas to enhance collaboration, close referral loops, and embed social needs into patient-centered care processes in a meaningful and sustainable way.

9:45 – 10:30 AM **Cancer Screening & Preventive Care: A Case-Based Learning Session**

This interactive session uses real-world case scenarios to examine challenges and opportunities in improving cancer screening and preventive care. Participants will explore common barriers that impact screening uptake, including issues related to trust, health literacy, and varying patient perceptions, and discuss practical approaches to addressing these factors in diverse populations. The session will emphasize how thoughtful coordination across teams and intentional patient engagement can increase screening rates and support early detection.

10:30 – 11:00 AM **Break**

11:00 – 12:00 PM From Insight to Performance

This session explores how leaders can translate insight into sustained performance by aligning workforce well-being, leadership practices, and patient outcomes. Participants will examine the connection between team dynamics, engagement, and the overall patient experience, gaining a clearer understanding of how internal environments shape external results. The session will highlight the importance of psychological safety and proactive burnout prevention in building resilient, high-performing teams. Attendees will learn how leadership behaviors—through modeling, coaching, and recognition—can embed emotional intelligence into everyday practice, strengthening trust, communication, and accountability.

Speakers

Charlson Gaines, Ph.D.



Dr. Charlson Gaines is a Health Psychologist, and 20-year U.S. Air Force disabled veteran specializing in emotional intelligence, resilience, and the primary prevention of interpersonal and self-directed violence. He has worked for many years in the violence prevention space, focused on preventing all forms of interpersonal and self-directed violence, primarily with the US Air Force’s Violence Prevention Program, the US Navy’s Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Program, and most recently with the 53rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team as part of the Florida National Guard. Dr. Gaines has spoken at countless events and delivered training for diverse audiences including the U.S. Air Force, U.S. Army National Guard, National Air and Space Intelligence Center, Department of Health and Human Services, Osceola County, FL Government, the National Kidney Foundation, and the Disney Tourism Bureau. He has presented at national conferences such as the Institute on Violence, Abuse & Trauma Summit, the Department of the Air Force Women’s Air and Space Power Symposium, and the U.S. Navy’s Joint Safety and Environmental Professional Development Symposium. Known for his direct, engaging style, Dr. Gaines translates complex psychological science into actionable strategies that drive measurable outcomes for individuals, leaders, and organizations.

Tonya M. Davis, MBA, CQIA



Tonya M. Davis, MBA, CQIA, is a healthcare executive and quality improvement strategist with over 20 years of experience advancing patient outcomes and operational performance. She serves as a Subject Matter Expert for the HRSA Cancer Screening Technical Assistance Program, led by Veritas Management Group (VMG). Tonya specializes in improving cancer screening rates, optimizing clinical workflows, and strengthening care delivery systems. A Certified Professional in Quality Improvement and Lean Six Sigma expert, she has led transformative initiatives across major institutions, including Johns Hopkins Hospital and Robert Wood Johnson Barnabas Health System.